

A Line of Cutting Women

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A Line of Cutting Women is a refreshing, rich, satisfying collection of 37 short stories published over the last two decades by CALYX: A Journal of Art and Literature by Women. It contains a great mix of voices including Jewish, Mormon, lesbian, Native American, African American, Asian and Mexican and styles ranging from the plain spoken to the magical/mystical. It is a pleasure to experience so many voices in so many styles and all written well. The authors range from the unknown to the famous, including Linda Hogan, the Chickasaw writer of the 1995 novel Solar Storms and Mean Spirit, a 1991 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. CALYX, based in Corvallis, Oregon, has dedicated itself to discovering and publishing developing writers since its journal first was published in June 1976.

The book's title takes its name from a story by Rita Marie Nibasa, whose main character inherits, through role models from her mother and grandmother, violence as a personal way to cope with men who press their thumbs too hard on women's lives. "I come from a line of cutting women, so it was only natural that I took up the knife," says Darlene, who at the story's end has a transcendent, shimmering revelation about dreams for herself that she never knew she had. "My mother's mother cut six men, my mother cut four. At 17 I had cut only one, but it was enough to make me lay down my knife."

Nibasa dedicated her story to "those who've seen everything but a way out." A Line of Cutting Women, similarly, is a collection of stories about women seeing their way through love, bigotry, girlhood, aging, health problems and dying, family life and life in a sometimes choking but ever vital world.

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